



Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission

Agenda Item: _____

Advisory Information

Title: **Blueprint For Equity**

☐ Action ☒ Discussion ☐ Informational

Date: March 25, 2014

Prepared By: David M Rubedor, Director, Neighborhood and Community Relations Department

Attachments: Commitment to Equity Statement

Requested Action: No action is requested. This is a discussion item.

Background

At the February 20th NCEC Committee of the Whole meeting, the NCR department staff presented a re-focus to the Blueprint for Equity work. The new approach narrows the focus and aligns the Blueprint for Equity work with other existing engagement strategies. The majority of the CoW meeting was used to discuss this new approach.

We have realized that our initial approach to the Blueprint for Equity has taken too much capacity for both the NCEC and the NCR staff and was too broad to be effective. In addition to the Blueprint work, there are multiple engagement efforts going on right now that have tapped the capacity of our staff, the NCEC and neighborhood groups.

The Blueprint for Equity is a multi-year strategic plan focused on engaging neighborhood organizations to see their decisions and allocations of resources through a lens of equity and inclusion. With access to millions of dollars annually, as well as political and social resources, the City's 70 neighborhood organizations can be a significant partner in addressing racial disparities in our community. Initially, we started with an engagement strategy similar to the way we approached the development of the Community Participation Program and consistent with the City's adopted Core Principles of Engagement. This approach set the goal of meeting individually with 80%, or 56 of the neighborhood organizations in the City in addition to 20 community-based cultural organizations.

This initial phase of meeting with neighborhood organizations was intended to serve several outcomes:

- 1) Raise awareness around the equity issues and establish addressing them as a City priority,
- 2) Develop an understanding with the NCEC and the NCR what equity work neighborhoods were already doing, and
- 3) Begin the process of developing tools and strategies that would support neighborhoods in being more equitable in their work.

After this initial engagement phase, the NCEC and the department were planning to develop recommended tools and strategies, similar to the racial equity toolkit, to support neighborhood groups.

A total of nine neighborhood meetings have occurred. As mentioned, the capacity to support our original approach is limited, at best. Our engagement work has also expanded considerably since starting this effort and we have some new engagement tools that we can now use (One Minneapolis, LETF, etc.).

Discussion

Narrowing the Focus: The primary goal of engaging neighborhood organizations to see their decisions and allocations of resources through a lens of equity and inclusion is too broad. Everything from outreach to education and employment disparities could be considered aligned with this goal.

As discussed at the CoW meeting, the original goal appears to be overly vague and unclear as to what we are trying to achieve. The NCR department, the NCEC and the neighborhood organizations' area of influence and control is around the City's engagement system and practices. If our engagement efforts are equitable in their approach and implementation, community issues will be truly represented and discussed, and decision makers will reflect the communities of which they serve. Therefore, our work on should really be focused on the goal of:

Creating an equitable community engagement system.

This includes:

1. Neighborhood organizations' outreach, inclusion and decision making *process*,
2. Composition and operating environment of the City's board and commissions, and
3. City department outreach and engagement.

Maximizing the Engagement Strategy: Our current strategy not only requires an extraordinary level of capacity from the department and the NCEC, it lacks recognition of and operates in isolation to the many other successful community engagement efforts already underway. As a result, the Blueprint lives outside of many conversations where it should be discussed. It also runs the risk of over-engaging and being confusing to our communities.

To address this we can have targeted focus groups with both neighborhoods and culturally-based organizations to develop the strategies and tools that neighborhoods are looking for to guide their work. The focus groups can be smaller in size and more manageable. We can also use existing engagement work (instead of creating more) to gather information and input (ie. joint NCEC/HECE community meetings, One Minneapolis Fund partners, Community Connections Conferences, etc.) to inform our process and to gather input. Through the focus groups, we can build broader community buy-in and ownership and develop some specific goals and strategies. The smaller groups will also be more manageable and can be supported by both the NCEC and the NCR. We can then use our existing engagement network and activities to help message out the tools that we develop and to get feedback.

Next Steps: The NCR department is developing a work plan incorporating the Blueprint work into existing community engagement efforts. This will be presented at the next NCEC CoW meeting for further discussion and development.